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Victoria in Good Shape

MAYOR SCURRAH'S annual comment on the operations of the city has served to highlight progress made last year with some of the long-term needs of the community. Replacement of Point Ellice bridge, more adequate provision for the central fire hall, and a firm approach to Victoria's parking problem perhaps take the limelight. In the mayor's wish that the main approach to Beacon Hill Park be improved by the Capital Improvement District Commission many will join. There is no project which would yield a better return for a relatively small outlay; especially now that downtown cables are being buried, and the whole aspect of the city's centre brightened up.

Completion of the central fire hall and a vigorous start on the new parking mall seem to be the two main projects in hand at the turn of the year. Their completion should put Victoria abreast of its program. We take it for granted that a new city hall has been shelved for the present, in view of current economic trends. Mr. Scurrah's possible bid for the Pan-American Games is attractive as an idea, but without a large stadium and other appurtenances on an equivalent scale it is doubtful if such a program could be carried out in time. Not as city obligations, but community necessities, for all that, there are two large hospital extensions in Victoria which cannot be indefinitely delayed. The need is acute.

The steady improvement in Victoria's financial position by reason of tightened management shows well in the year-end report. The city is retiring its debt on a firmly budgeted basis, with plenty in hand by way of assets and funded reserves to meet the peak of its retirement schedule in the next decade, and a considerable value in property assets in the city-owned lands. If the same canny policy is maintained, Victoria should have very little to grumble over in 10 years' time. There is not much now, save in the disparity between human wishes and the time for their fulfillment.

To the mayor and council, and city staffs contributing to this progress in 1958 should go merited thanks.

Big Brotherhood

IT SEEMS apparent that a big brother is stalking the federal government with intent to reduce employees to the status of stooges. It is no wonder government service loses its appeal for individuals of special skills and attainment. If the treatment given Mr. Edward Argyle is a criterion, only those willing to be suppliant robots are welcome.

Mr. Argyle, a technician at the Saanich observatory, dared to express an opinion about the U.S. rocket Atlas. He called it a propaganda stunt. That may have been impolite or it may have been near the truth. Some American observers questioned the good taste of a Christmas message coming from an instrument that certainly is not designed as a peace vehicle. For his temerity, or candidness, Mr. Argyle has been severely reprimanded and with his fellow employees warned that dismissal will follow any similar comment in future.

The point to be noted is that Mr. Argyle was giving voice to the freedom of speech believed to be the heritage of all Canadians. He did not criticize his employer, his government or his own country. His remarks were unrelated to his obligations as a civil servant, and thus he neither broke a rule nor offended against his oath of employment. His view may or may not have been valid—senior department officials dismissed it as inexperienced and valueless, which should therefore have greatly lessened their concern—but that is not the issue.

The federal department he serves says his comment represented an official statement. That is eyewash and an excuse for its harshness. The head of the observatory here publicly dissociated the observatory from Mr. Argyle's remarks, making them obviously his own. The inference is that he is being punished because the federal government does not want anything said that might sound unfavorable to the United States.

On this basis therefore a civil servant becomes less than a second-class citizen. If he speaks at all, even on a matter which has no connection with his own work, he must follow the government line—or else. That is big brotherhood with a vengeance, and it makes a mockery of Mr. Diefenbaker's bill of rights.

Mandatory Suspension

BRITISH COLUMBIA traffic authorities searching for ways to reduce the numbers of traffic deaths and accidents due to excessive speed might find it profitable to study the state laws of New Jersey.

In that state speed limits range from 25 to 50 miles an hour on streets and highways. Under a new law which went into effect at the beginning of 1959 any driver exceeding the speed limit becomes liable to mandatory suspension of his licence. For a first offence the period of suspension is a fixed 30 days, which is doubled for a second offence. A third conviction calls for revocation of licence for an indefinite period. That is the law, and from now on the New Jersey traffic courts have no say as to whether a speeding driver shall keep or forfeit his licence.

This system of mandatory withdrawal of driving privileges is not an experiment. It has been adopted by the State of New Jersey three years after being put into effect in Connecticut. Legislation directed against excessive speed, as the chief cause of traffic deaths and serious accidents, was adopted in Connecticut in 1956. Since then the licences of nearly 28,000 motorists have been suspended.

In New Jersey the new law against speeding has been described as hysterical by some of the automobile clubs. The significant fact remains, however, that last year Connecticut was rated as the safest state in which to drive. The attainment of that record by a state which used not to have a particularly good one would appear to be more than a coincidence.

Anguished pleas in court show that lawbreaking drivers generally value their licences more than their money, and suspension is viewed as worse punishment than a fine, even a fairly heavy one. In this province the practice of letting speeders off with fines appears to be an ineffective weapon against dangerous driving.

Interpreting the News

Mikoyan Is 'Shopping'

By ED SIMON
Canadian Press Staff Writer

ANASTAS Mikoyan is quietly probing official Washington, a spot considered by many non-residents to possess almost as many baffling complexities as outer space.

Russia's vice-premier, trade expert and general trouble-shooter convinced virtually nobody when he described the trip as a private visit. Because of his standing in the Soviet hierarchy, European observers attach profound significance to his presence in the United States.

Like the more publicized Soviet space rocket, the tight-lipped Armenian would appear to be primarily engaged in an exploratory mission. Any major development in Russian-American trade relations would require congressional action, and few political issues occupying the two countries appear to offer prospects of immediate solution.

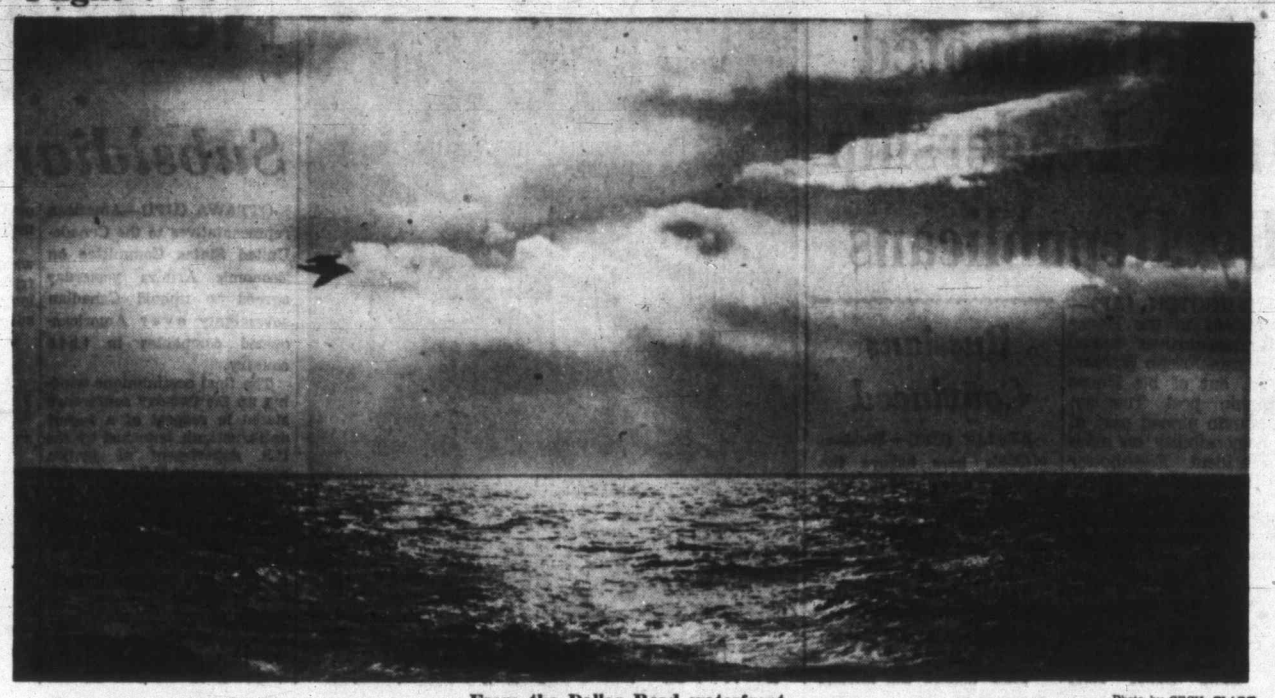
In sending Mikoyan to Washington, Premier Khrushchev can look to the minimum achievement of establishing personal contact between his No. 2 man and the leaders of the Eisenhower administration. In all probability he is counting on his special envoy to melt some of the president's hostility toward summit conference.

Beyond the obvious goodwill potential of Mikoyan's visit, speculation on the possible subjects under discussion ranges as widely as the rocket itself, which is seen as lending urgency to an agreement governing space experiments.

The rocket's progress also underlines the importance of international control of nuclear armaments, but there appears to be little chance of progress until the technical experts iron out their difficulties at the current talks in Geneva.

In the political field, West Berlin is the most likely topic. In his private discussions, Mikoyan appears to have an ideal opportunity to clarify the Russian position and compare notes with State Secretary Dulles on possible avenues for negotiation on the German problem as a whole.

Flight . . .



From the Dallas Road waterfront. —Photo by CECIL CLARK

Thinking Aloud

". . . of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—of cabbages and kings."

By TOM TAYLOR

I AM sorry now there was a hiatus in my Biblical knowledge between, say, my Sunday school days and more recent years. Had I been better aware of things around the time I was eligible for a key of the door I might have enriched my cultural appreciation.

For instance, Samson and Delilah, brought back to memory by the Colonist "comic" section last Sunday. Therein, as you would notice if you read these weekly tales from the Book, as surely you do, the story of the Israelite strongman and the Philistine maiden has begun.

It was the opening paragraph that arrested my attention, to wit: "In the Valley of Sorek lived the beautiful Delilah . . ." When I was there, more years ago than I care to remember, I had forgotten that valley had a Biblical name. Perhaps the Canadian soldiers now in that vicinity are better posted. I hope so, for even an enforced sojourn in Palestine, to use an ancient name for a land now marked otherwise on maps, can be entrancing if one is conscious of his storied surroundings.

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In retrospect at least I think so; at the time I was not sufficiently attentive.

But I did see Delilah's house. Rather I should say I saw a building we called the Red House, which reputedly stood on the site of the mansion in which Delilah reigned. Judging by the Colonist illustration it was a mansion, and, I notice, it had a red roof. That should support the thesis of the Red House. In addition the latter was also enclosed by trees.

If I remember correctly the Red House was just off the side of Wadi Ghuzzeh, a deep dry watercourse which ran to the Mediterranean nearby. For some reason I now regret, whatever it was, I was not inquisitive enough and paid it scant concern, even after being told this was where Samson came to grief. Perhaps I was sorry Samson was not with us—he would have been a rare bet on night patrol—and that was all.

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We did not know this area as the Valley of Sorek, however, unless this name belonged to the glen which stretched from behind the Red House right up to Ali Muntar, the fortified hill which stood off Gaza from our close acquaintance. This glen we called Happy Valley, although it would not rank as quite as happy as the Metchosin valley of that name. Not that it was really unpleasant, looking back anyway. Apart from the risk of being rudely dispatched any day to another world our sojourn there had its fair moments. They might even have been akin to the days when Samson strolled thereabouts, for as you would note from the Colonist drawings he too was espied upon by enemies.

I suppose it's all different now. There will be a bridge over the Wadi Ghuzzeh, and a nice black-top road up Happy Valley to Gaza itself. There might even be a gas station outside the Red House, if it is still standing. Sometime if ever I meet a Canadian soldier returned from UN duty around the Valley of Sorek I will ask him.

Perhaps I should send a copy of the Colonist to the UN's Canadian contingent, so the troops might appreciate the historic nature of their surroundings; although, undoubtedly being much better informed than we were, they probably know all about Samson and have looked with interest on the spot in Gaza where he pulled down the pillars. At this moment, indeed, some young Canadian in khaki shorts, also just qualified for a key of the door—when he gets home—may be standing on Ali Muntar looking down Happy Valley to the garden of Samson and Delilah a few miles away.

Letter from London

Job Waiting for Mr. Crump

By RICHARD L. THOMAS

NOT long ago someone walked out of Canada House in Trafalgar Square, looked up at the illuminated sign opposite bearing the legend "Canadian Pacific" and exclaimed, "Oh, merciful heavens; no!—not that."

Several of us laughed. We should not have done, of course. It was painfully near sacrilege—rather like laughing in church. One may do and say many things about that august organization, but not laugh. But we all understand the feeling after a 3,000-mile voyage across the Atlantic. London at last and all that . . . and then the haunting fires of a familiar legend blazoned in the night sky.

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It came back to me the other night when, of all places in the world, I heard a passenger at the barrier in a loud, accented voice proclaim, "I wish to heaven you'd send for Mr. Crump."

"Mr. Who, sir?" asked the baffled ticket collector.

"Mr. Crump. He knows how to run a railway."

The station was Herne Bay in Kent. If there had not been such a crush between me and the outspoken gentleman I would have asked him a few questions and maybe shared a nostalgic noggin. As it was I was last out. The ticket collector scratched his head and said plaintively "Oo the 'ell is Mr. Lump?"

"Crump," I suggested. He looked belligerent for a moment and then said, "Who's he?"

I told him that the Mr. Crump I was thinking of was the president of Canadian Pacific and that was a pretty big railway.

A prophet is so often without honor in his own country. I am well aware that Canadian Pacific is sometimes laughed at and abused—but I know too that it runs what is undoubtedly the finest train in the world today.

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I thought warmly of Mr. Crump. We had just travelled what was supposed to be a non-stop journey from London to Herne Bay—with seven stops and a dozen signal checks. The express was scheduled to run at an average speed of 40 m.p.h. for 60 miles. It actually achieved an average of about 23 m.p.h. and arrived an hour late on a one-hour and 35 minutes journey. Mr. Crump carried me 2,800 miles across Canada at an average speed of 40 m.p.h. and landed me in Vancouver a couple of minutes early.

My mind went back to that spotless train and to the superb service—to the American who sat next to me and said with a full heart that he had travelled the world and there was nothing anywhere like The Canadian.

The south coast of Britain should provide a showpiece for British Railways. You may travel from Dover to London on a boat train and regretfully I must report that unless you are very lucky you will find it dirty, over-crowded and painfully slow. We just haven't got a "crack train" any more. The nearest to it, perhaps, is the Golden Arrow — but it falls far below the standards of The Canadian. Even the uniforms of the staff are slovenly. You won't get an ashtray emptied unless you do it yourself—on to the floor. No one thinks that the train needs a water splash and revolving brushes to clean the windows.

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One could say that it is the difference between private enterprise and nationalization. There would be some merit in the argument. There was a time when railways in Britain were a model for the world. Today they are broadly a horrible example. True they were badly bashed during the war. They have had to suffer from obsolete rolling stock and run on tracks suffering from lack of wartime maintenance. It is true that a modernization program is being built up costing something like $600,000,000 — but you cannot travel today on a program for tomorrow.

Even the most ancient coach could be painted; and the newest needs to have its windows cleaned. It does not need a multi-million dollar modernization program to empty ash trays or sweep the floor. It costs no more to serve a good meal in a dining car than a bad one. It is futile to talk of lack of patronage, as the railways here do, and then pack people into corridors like sardines—as they also do. There is something singularly inept in cutting down rail services when the trains operating cannot carry the people travelling in comfort.

It almost seems as though no one really cares. And echo answers: why should they? Nationalized industry rarely sacks people. It can't go broke because the taxpayers find the loss.

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It might be an idea to send for Mr. Crump. His organization pays thousands of dollars a day to the government in taxation. Over here the railways absorb thousands a day from the treasury. There is something wrong somewhere.

Not Always Wrong

Dr. Chisholm's Fantasy

(From The Winnipeg Free Press)

PROBABLY more than any man in Canada, Dr. Brock Chisholm has the faculty of putting parents' backs up. It is not long ago that irate mammas and papas were after him for trying to destroy their children's belief in Santa Claus. Now he is apparently trying to undermine what little respect children have for their parents.

The other day in Vancouver, Dr. Chisholm told a political meeting that children should be taught that parents are not always good and right but that sometimes they are bad and wrong. And he urged a "new independence of mind" amongst youngsters to help them think for themselves.

Leaving aside the question of how parents will take to his remarks, one can only wonder in what kind of a dream world Dr. Chisholm has been living. Are there today any youngsters who believe that their parents are always good and right and never bad and wrong? Many parents will argue that quite the opposite is true; that children, as they have always done, don't see their parents as demi-gods, but more as old fogies, real squares, who just don't know what is right and what isn't. As for independence of mind, most young people seem to have plenty of that now. Parents may well feel that the good doctor would be doing the world a greater service if he argued that young people should be taught that their parents are not always wrong, rather than that they are not always right.

That Useless Word

(From The Toronto Star)

CAN'T we get rid of this word "teen-ager"? It has become a menace to clear meaning in the English language. Widely and innocently used to denote boys and girls of ages 13 to 19, the word has attracted magnetically a growing load of implications for many people. So it conjures up pictures of kids in black leather jackets, of tough neighborhoods pregnant with juvenile delinquency.

That's a libel. It is all the worse because the word teen-ager is used innocently so often, with the libellous inference drawn by those who hear the word with a different meaning. Grown-ups would understand the injustice if the word "adult" acquired a bad ring—as teen-ager often has—because of the criminality of some adults.

There have always been delinquent boys and girls, but it is a phenomenon of the 1950's to tag all youngsters with the misdemeanors or crimes of a few. We profess to deplore guilt by association, but there it is on a million-fold scale.

Fun, Fact and Fiction

Culture is so broadening. The new home of the Metropolitan Opera is to have wider seats.

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Atomic radiation, says a scientist, is no more perilous to the public than a motorcar. We trust this was meant to be reassuring.

A businessman called his wife from the office late one afternoon.

"I've got two tickets for My Fair Lady," he told her.

"Wonderful, darling," she cried. "I'll start dressing at once."

"Please do," he replied. "They are for tomorrow night."

The Packsack

By GREGORY CLARK

IN the past few days there have been no fewer than three TV news shots showing three different high officials reviewing troops on ceremonial occasions.

And on each occasion the notable gentleman doing the so-called reviewing walked briskly along the ranks of soldiers standing at rigid attention without so much as casting a glance at any one of them, or at them as a unit.

Briskly accompanied by the commander of the guard of honor, the distinguished citizen appeared to be reviewing the movie camera. At least that was the only thing he was looking at.

Times have changed. I don't recall George V doing that. He was the one with the beard. When he reviewed a guard of honor, he did them the honor of looking at them. He walked proudly but respectfully before the guard, his eyes left. He looked into faces, he looked at service ribbons, (and paused), he glanced up at headdresses, he glanced down at boots. As he marched along the rear rank he would often turn to take a look at the belts, the buttons and the style of the front rank as seen from behind. He was not a soldier. He was a sailor. And he knew that the men he was passing within touching distance of him were going to tell their grandchildren about it, forty years later, when his grand-daughter or grandson would be the one to whom allegiance is sworn.

Maybe our present-day reviewers of guards of honor do not expect to be much remembered.